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**Annie:** Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs, and I'm so happy to be here with you today. Today we continue our special series called Build Your Board, a That Sounds Fun podcast series in which we want to help you find the voices you need to live the life you want. Because in a world of influencers, you get to decide who is influencing you.

We've created that Build Your Board guidebook for this series. Y'all, we have loved seeing your pictures of your notes and what you're taking away from each episode so far. Our hope is that by the end of this series, you will have a completed guidebook and the answer to the question, Who is the next voice I need to help me build the life that I want? Just go to [anniefdowns.com/buildyourboard](http://anniefdowns.com/buildyourboard) to download your copy of the guidebook.

Before we dive into today's conversation, I want to tell you about one of our incredible sponsors. This episode is sponsored by BetterHelp. This is so relevant in today's conversation because we're going to talk all about therapy and counseling. And BetterHelp is a great option if you're wanting to give therapy a try.

When you're in a season where it feels like your mind is racing all the time, where you're needing to process big moments in your life or big emotions, therapy is such a helpful tool. And as we'll talk about today, a therapist may be the person you need to add to your board.

Therapy has been a game-changer for me. I'm a better Annie because of the work I've done with my counselor over the past decade. If you want to give therapy a try, consider BetterHelp where your session can be done right from home.

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**Intro:** Today on the show we're continuing our Build Your Board series with licensed therapist, Melanie Rogers. You know counseling has been a huge part of my life and growth. So I wanted to bring on a trusted counselor who can help us sort through the common questions so many people have when you're trying to figure out if you need a counselor and how you get started.

Melanie is the founder of Come Alive Counseling here in Nashville. We talk about your questions. Like, how do I know if I need a counselor versus a mentor? And how long do I need to be in counseling? And who can I trust as a counselor? Whether you're a therapist yourself or a pastor or leader, like, how do I find a therapist?

I know some of you are all in on counseling and others of you are unsure and interested. And I think this conversation is like a counseling 101 starting place to help all of us figure out the role therapy can play either in short seasons or as ongoing support in our lives.

So if you're following along with us in the Build Your Board guidebook, you're going to be taking notes for this one on page seven. So here is my Build Your Board conversation with Melanie Rogers.

[00:03:17] <Music>

**Annie:** Melanie, welcome to That Sounds Fun.

**Melanie:** Thank you.

**Annie:** Thank you so much for doing this.

**Melanie:** You're very welcome.

**Annie:** I know this is not how you normally spend your time.

**Melanie:** Well, it's newer.

**Annie:** Will you kind of tell us what you do and why you were the voice on this episode today?

**Melanie:** Because you asked me to.

**Annie:** Yeah, that's right. Because we're friends and you're kind.

**Melanie:** I'm a therapist in Nashville. I've been in the area for 22 years now-

**Annie:** Oh, wow.

**Melanie:** ...and in private practice for 8, 9 years. I have a practice called Come Alive Counseling and there are usually 3, 4 of us in the practice. We're kind of running out of office space now. We see men, women, couples. I do not see couples, but people in my practice do. And the range of ages from high school kids upward.

**Annie:** Wow. When you and I met you were a school counselor.

**Melanie:** Yes.

**Annie:** Why'd you make the switch to private counseling?

**Melanie:** I loved my time at the school, in the two schools. I think I felt limited in the work I could do within the limited time that schools would allow and just wanted to do deeper work. And had missed grownups, honestly. I loved playing with kids, but I felt like I was more designed for kind of the deeper work with grownups. I think my fear was being confined to four walls. But I knew I wanted to bring more of me to work.

**Annie:** You are truly one of the deepest wells I know. So being with adults I think makes so much sense. Because you're like, I've gotta go deeper than this.

**Melanie:** Yeah. I think the work with kids did certainly remind me of developmentally what a fifth grader is like and how they experience the world so that when I'm working with adults, I can remember, Oh, you were in fifth grade when that happened.

**Annie:** Oh, wow.

**Melanie:** So I think my work with kids and adolescents really served my work with adults.

**Annie:** I know you're under a lot of what you can't say 'rules'. One thing I will say is there are people, people are hearing in this series that know you very well. There are some of your people in this series. So it's amazing your reach of who you meet with. You can throw a rock and hit someone that sees Melanie Rogers as their therapist. I have no idea how you have time to do all this. How many clients can you see? How many do you have?

**Melanie:** I see around 22 to 24 a week.

**Annie:** Melanie!

**Melanie:** But when you think about it, I mean, it's about six a day, five to six, and have an hour break. So it's kinda you just find your rhythm and kind of how much space you need. My goal is to be sustainable to do this for a long time. The great thing is I can change it. If there's a season where I need to do less, I can do that.

**Annie:** You have some control over that.

**Melanie:** Mm-Hmm.

**Annie:** I mean, the title of this episode is, What's the deal with counseling? Because I went to a counselor as a kid when I was in second and third grade. So it's kind of always been a part of my life. I didn't know it was super weird. But a lot of Christians felt like it was, feel like it is. What's the deal with counseling? Why do Christians feel concerned about it sometimes?

**Melanie:** Well, it's funny. Nashville is just a unique place, so I almost would be better to answer that question from a different city.

**Annie:** Right, because everybody here is in counseling.

**Melanie:** It's not even, where do you go to church? It's who's your therapist?

**Annie:** That's why I know the people who sees you.

**Melanie:** I do wonder... I think I can speak for my own experience even in being a therapist. But maybe in the Christian community, I really had to struggle—this sounds ridiculous now—but through do I really need—this is crazy—but do I really need other people or do I just need God? I know that sounds wild.

**Annie:** No, so many people are asking that this month as we're talking through this series.

**Melanie:** Yeah. And I know it just sounds-

**Annie:** Just because can't the Holy Spirit tell me? I mean, I wrestle with that. Like, do I have to run every decision by someone or doesn't the Holy Spirit teach me?

**Melanie:** I, somewhere along the way, learned that maybe it's less healthy or less... there's something scary about needing people, you know? And certainly there's a continuum of healthy need and unhealthy. But I think somewhere there's just some weird theology that kind of has made people skittish of need.

**Annie:** Men more than women or is about equal? Again, here in Nashville...

**Melanie:** It's hard to say. I see predominantly women. I have some precious male clients, but I don't know that there's a difference among Christians men or women. I think it's just more of a... I don't even want to stereotype that. You know, I think our culture gives women more permission to need. But that's really the only difference I see.

**Annie:** I was at an event earlier this week and two men that I'm friends with I did not know they knew each other. And they weren't interacting at all. And then finally as we're leaving, they go up and hug each other and I was like, "How do y'all know each other?" And they're like, "Oh, we have a mutual friend." And I was like, "Is it someone I'm friends with? Who is it?" And they're like, "Yeah, we have a friend." And I was like, "Yeah, but who?"

And then they said a counselor's name. And I was like, "I'm sorry. I should not have pushed that hard." I just thought we had a mutual friend and I was so excited. And they were like, "Yeah, Annie, it's our therapist." I was like, "Oh, sorry, sorry, sorry." But I love that they were both like, yeah, this is... they didn't say stop asking. They were like, "Yeah, this is a thing." I guess I didn't realize how unique that was to where we live.

**Melanie:** It really is. Talking to friends in different cities, not only is it so hard to find good therapists, there's just still a stigma that... I don't feel like we face as much in Nashville. I feel like we're very therapeutically rich, you know?

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Melanie:** So we're just lucky to be in this kind of community.

**Annie:** How does someone know when it's time to seek a counselor?

**Melanie:** I think that's changing because I think there's a lot more permission now. You don't have to be, you know, in a crisis necessarily. But I would say a couple things. Maybe when emotions feel overwhelming or just you've kind of exhausted the resources. Like running, it's not working or exercise, or you know, more sleep.

People with distressing emotions, that's often what they present with. A lot of times there are physical symptoms that are-

**Annie:** Oh, wow. Something in your body.

**Melanie:** Yeah. People are more aware of those kind of thing now. It could be anything from just headaches and migraines to stomach problems. And sometimes they're doctors even are more aware that, Hey, you might want to check in with a therapist or...

**Annie:** It's the world responding to what spiritually we've known as believers for a long time, that we are a spirit, soul, and body.

**Melanie:** Yeah.

**Annie:** And they're all connected. That is so interesting.

**Melanie:** I hear a lot of people say, "I've talked to all my friends and they don't know what to do with me." I think relationship issues, just people just... maybe they need a space that's more confidential than maybe their friends they feel like they can share with their friends because they want to protect their spouse maybe or another person.

Stuckness seems to be a theme. Like, I feel stuck. Like, I want to be here, but I don't know how to get there. Or I want to feel differently, or I want to respond differently, or I want to be more connected to a life force kind of, you know? Like, I want to feel more alive. You know? So the reasons are across the boards.

**Annie:** If someone's asking, "Should I see a counselor?" does that mean yes?

**Melanie:** I don't know. I don't know that it's a black-and-white thing. But I would ask them maybe what they've tried, you know, kind of what they're looking for. But there's certainly no harm. I mean, it's a financial and a time investment in yourself. And if you find a good one, it's only gonna benefit you. So there's really no harm in trying it.

**Annie:** Right. Right. It can't hurt.

**Melanie:** It can't hurt anything.

**Annie:** Right. I mean, even the confidentiality thing you're saying, one of the big questions... so I've done a couple of ask me questions on socials around this Build Your Board series. Multiple pastors have said to me, "How do I find a therapist? I can't tell someone in our town, I can't tell someone in our church everything I'm dealing with." They feel that, so it's true. They feel it, so it's true. It's true enough to them.

**Melanie:** Right.

**Annie:** How do pastors find a therapist they can trust? How do therapists find therapists? Let's do those separate. How does a pastor find a therapist?

**Melanie:** It is a tougher... You know, I think when we were talking earlier about confidentiality is confidentiality. So there's not greater confidentiality, I as a therapist, can provide a pastor than you, say. But I understand that it's more intimidating if that confidentiality is broken. A pastor has potentially more at stake.

One thing I have suggested is if they really can't... you know, word of mouth I think is great. If they are in a community of pastors... Like in my church, I mean, the pastors are really open with each other. So if one has found a therapist they really trust, certainly start there with people you trust.

But also another option could be a virtual therapist if you're in a community where it's a really tight community where you know everyone. The law limits us to... in virtual therapy, you have to be licensed in the state that we're practicing.

**Annie:** Oh, okay.

**Melanie:** So I could see a therapist in Knoxville or someone in Knoxville could see a therapist in Chattanooga virtually.

**Annie:** Oh, Wow.

**Melanie:** So that might provide some confidentiality, some privacy potentially.

**Annie:** That is brilliant. This is a uniquely Nashville thing too, though, some other cities like this, a lot of people here are famous. So a lot of people want to find a counselor that they can go, Can I actually tell you or are you gonna call People Magazine? Can I actually tell you or are you gonna post this on social media, whatever? And they don't because therapists have big laws they have to abide by. Even in court, right?

**Melanie:** Right.

**Annie:** But even you saying that to me, I go, Oh, if I need to process something specific, I could call a practice in Knoxville and say, Do you do virtual appointments?

**Melanie:** Right. Right.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Melanie:** I've had a couple situations where that did provide a safer outlet that maybe wasn't intuitive to the pastor. Or Chattanooga has some great therapists. So speaking of people that are pastors in Nashville, that would be some great options, some cities with some good therapists.

**Annie:** That is such a brilliant hack, Melanie. I mean, that is brilliant.

**Melanie:** And you know, it's things that... I only know that through experience. Right?

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Melanie:** I mean, trying to-

**Annie:** That's why you're on that side of the microphone for me because I've never one time thought, Oh, a pastor could do virtual in a different city.

**Melanie:** And the exciting thing that's happening in the therapeutic world is that states are joining what's called a compact. That will allow... it's not up and going yet. It should be in the springtime. But where a state like Tennessee was early to join a compact where we can practice virtually across state lines.

Let's say if Colorado is in the compact and Tennessee is in the compact, it would be super easy for me to get licensed in Colorado.

**Annie:** Oh, wow.

**Melanie:** Just a little bit of paperwork so I could see someone virtually in Colorado in a rural area maybe that didn't have a lot of access to therapist.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Melanie:** So that's gonna open things up tremendously.

**Annie:** Even more. Right. Because there is just something about, can someone speak into this who does not know my community?

**Melanie:** Absolutely. Absolutely.

**Annie:** One of the greatest things my therapist said to me years ago was I don't care about what your friends think. I don't care about what your family thinks. I actually don't even care about what you think. I care about your health. And she was like, so if we're actually doing the healthy thing for you, it's this, this, this. And I thought, "Oh, that is the gift of counseling is it's someone who speaks into my life and does not have the baggage I have about what everybody else thinks."

**Melanie:** Absolutely.



**Annie:** So to be able to check in with someone in a different city who really doesn't care what your church thinks.

**Melanie:** Exactly.

**Annie:** Because they don't even know Woodstock Baptist or you know-

**Melanie:** What that means.

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Melanie:** Yeah.

**Annie:** Wow. That's brilliant. Do you do virtual?

**Melanie:** I do. It's not my favorite, for the record. But I love it for certain situations. So, a mom has a sick kid at home and they just really want to meet, but they can't leave. Or the babysitter's sick. I love it for that kind of situation. But on the whole, I think I'm glad we have it and I think there's something missing when we're not face to face. But there's a-

**Annie:** The energy.

**Melanie:** The energy, the little subtle movements of someone's leg. They're, you know, rocking their foot back and forth. I mean, just I'm reading so much that I can't read as much virtually.

**Annie:** When Dr. Anita Phillips was on a couple weeks ago, we talked about in her counseling office where she has clocks. Because that's one of the things I have found very interesting about my therapist is I know that she has a clock in my site and she has a clock in her site. What's your clock situation?

**Melanie:** Well, trial and error. I have a little alarm on my phone, and so I just set it. And it has a pretty gentle little chime at the mark that helps me know to land the plane. You've got five minutes to land this. That way I don't have to look at the clock, but the client can see a clock.

**Annie:** One of your clients has told me about the alarm.

**Melanie:** Oh, it's funny. She's always like, "So then the alarm went off and I knew..."

**Melanie:** Well, I tell them, "Just be aware that the chime will go off."

**Annie:** And that's your cue.

**Melanie:** And clients have also told me, "I don't like that chime." So I've changed the chime.

**Annie:** Oh my gosh.

**Melanie:** We don't want it to be disruptive to the nervous system. We want it to be gentle.

**Annie:** That's right.

[00:18:17] <Music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation to share about one of our amazing partners, [Reliefband](#). Nausea is truly the worst feeling ever, according to me. And whether you're prone to motion sickness or fighting morning sickness, congratulations, or going through chemo, Reliefband is the number one FDA-cleared anti-nausea wristband that has been clinically proven to quickly relieve and effectively prevent nausea and vomiting.

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**Sponsor:** And one more amazing partner I get to tell you about, [Raycon](#). That's how it's gonna sound in your ears when you're listening to your Raycon, you guys. It's the best time of year. College football, the leaves changing color, cozy vibes, and the holidays around the corner. You know, like Raycon's anniversary.

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[Buyraycon.com/thatsoundsfun](https://buyraycon.com/thatsoundsfun).

Okay, now back to our Build Your Board conversation with Melanie.

[00:21:20] <Music>

**Annie:** How does a therapist find a therapist? A lot of our friends listening are practicing like you. How do you find a therapist?

**Melanie:** That's a similar dilemma. And it's not as much for me. But there is some... I think it's almost like I know a lot about who's in the industry and so it makes me more particular. Also, I know a lot of these people professionally so it makes it harder.

Gosh, I've gotten really lucky to find my therapist and I'm very private about it. I talk about it all the time, but I don't give her a name out because I just-

**Annie:** I'm the same way.

**Melanie:** And she is so precious about just really protecting. Like she won't take any of my friends if she knows about it or just really protects that space just so I feel safe. Like I don't have to be managing what I'm bringing to her.

**Annie:** I thought that before because I know a lot of friends who see my counselor have been like, Are any of us talking about the same man? Like, is she ever listening to

me being like... So I'm kind of trying to figure out. And then the girl after me is like, so I'm kind of trying to figure out. And it's the same dude. I've thought about that. Totally.

**Melanie:** Yeah.

**Annie:** Do therapists need to be in therapy? Is that a part of the gig?

**Melanie:** I would hope so.

**Annie:** Okay. Because y'all carry a lot.

**Melanie:** Yes. I'm a lifer. I don't ever feel like I'm gonna be to the bottom with me. But maybe there'll be a day. I just feel like there's not only my own health, emotional, mental, all that, but it's kind of how other people's stories are intersecting with my story that I have to be on top of or I could harm someone. So I think it's... that's one of the-

**Annie:** You can like emotionally harm them?

**Melanie:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. I mean, just with my story, if I'm projecting, if I'm not clear on where I end and begin, I could project that on a client-

**Annie:** Oh, interesting.

**Melanie:** ...and not be as objective and not give them the help they need. So that's one of the first questions I would want to know. It's kind of hard to ask if they're... but are you in therapy? But I would want to know that they're in their own process or they're continuing to process because it is no small thing to carry all of that and just take care of yourself at the same time.

I think we all need, whether it's a therapist or a mentor or a spiritual director, to care for us, you know, in the work. So I would say I would love for my therapist to be in therapy.

**Annie:** I like that about some of my therapist friends, knowing that when I'm with my therapist friends, I just think for all the stories you heard today, and I don't know what the stories are, but I just think, man, if my counselor had four appointments like mine, I hope she's talking to somebody and getting some sort of rest and getting a place to not hold everything that comes in.

**Melanie:** Right. Right. Because it's usually not processing someone else's story, it's just how their story, what it stirred up in me, if that makes sense.

**Annie:** Right.

**Melanie:** So it's not like Annie's... you know, this was really heavy. You know, it's just more how it intersects with my story. And there has to be a place to process that.

**Annie:** So you mentioned spiritual director.

**Melanie:** Mm-hmm.

**Annie:** This is something I cannot sort out. So help me understand. Do I need a counselor and a spiritual...? What does a spiritual director do? How is that different from counseling?

**Melanie:** I can speak from my experience and maybe a few other people's experience because I'm not a spiritual director. But I have a spiritual director. I think they're both gifts. Let's just say that. I would say there's a lot of intersection and then there's distinction.

So I would say for me, almost like therapy helps me be more connected to me so that I can be more connected to you, other people and to God. So the more of me I have access to me, the more intimacy I'm gonna have with you and God.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Melanie:** So it's a process of kind of healing therapy, kind of emotional healing, and growth and hopefully becoming more of me. And then spiritual direction for me has been almost broadening my kind of near view of how I can experience God as me.

So it's kind of more of a matter of emphasis. It's kind of like, where are you in this story, Melanie? Like in your family of origin, like what did you feel as an eight-year-old child and what was that like and what could you not say?

And then spiritual direction is a little bit more of like, where was God and or Jesus in the story and kind...? It's more of an orientation. Almost like you're looking through a lens.

**Annie:** It's beautiful.

**Melanie:** One lens of therapy, like, where are you child? And then the other one is like, where is God in this picture in my story presently?

**Annie:** Wow.

**Melanie:** So to me they've been complementary to each other. And I was also in a group of therapists who were doing spiritual direction together.

**Annie:** Oh, wow.

**Melanie:** So that was amazing to have, you know, know people that came with a lot of access to themselves. They could talk about their feelings. But then we were able to talk about, not specific clients, but the process of therapy from a spiritual perspective. So that was really the coolest experience of getting to blend the two. But there's a lot of overlap.

**Annie:** I love the Kaleidoscope idea, the different sides of the thing. That is so helpful for me. Because I've been like, I have a pastor. Everybody knows Pastor Kevin, pastor of the pod. I have a pastor. I have a mentor, Nancy, who they're getting ready to hear on the... I think it's the next episode. So I have a mentor, someone who disciples me. And in that conversation, we talk about the difference of those. And I have a counselor.

But then people are like, what about a spiritual director? And I'm like, I don't know where a spiritual director fits when I have a pastor, a mentor, a counselor.

**Melanie:** And I think when I meet with a pastor, and I have some great ones, speaking of build your own board. But I usually am going to them a little bit more for direction or to talk through a specific-

**Annie:** Specific. Yeah, that's exactly right.

**Melanie:** I think I've loved spiritual direction because there's so much space and no one's giving you answers.

**Annie:** That's what I've heard.

**Melanie:** To me, I've just needed that space just to ask the questions. There's a lot of freedom to ask the questions that I might feel a little like, Oh, I'm in this denomination so I should think this way, or I'm, you know... There's just so much more room and freedom I think in spiritual direction.

**Annie:** Correct me if I'm wrong on this. When I'm thinking about spiritual direction for me, I'm thinking, man, that better be a person I really trust because they are a conduit. Not in a woo-woo spiritual way. But they are literally... we are sitting with God together.

With my counselor, I can process things and leave and go. Three out of four, I agree with what she said. One out of four I don't totally agree and I can just think about it.

**Melanie:** Right.

**Annie:** That feels more challenging in spiritual direction.

**Melanie:** I think, in my opinion, it is more vulnerable to open up that access to our spiritual being and to invite God into the process.

**Melanie:** It feels different. It's interesting. I'm a lot more emotive in spiritual direction.

**Annie:** Yeah. I bet I would be too.

**Melanie:** And we could only hypothesize about what that's about. But yeah, it just accesses a different place in me. But my therapist is a believer. So it's not like... but it's just a different invitation of who's in the room.

**Annie:** Oh, that was exactly what I was gonna ask you next. So thank you for leading me there, Melanie. One of the questions I got this week was, can you put nonbelievers on your board of directors in your life? If you're building your board, can you have nonbelievers? That is a big question.

For me, my counselor, having someone who's operating off the same life map as me really matters to me because we're making big decisions together about my life. And if they aren't seeing the same end goal as me that preach the gospel, die, and be forgotten kind of goal, I'm not sure that I want them helping me drive this particular area of my life.

Do you think Christians... I don't like to 'should' people around here. Do you think it's wisest for Christians to have Christian counselors?

**Melanie:** Hmm. I've gone in different directions on this. I think there are really bad counselors or unhealthy, I'll just say, therapists who are Christians. And I think they're really wise therapists who aren't believers. So I want both. I mean, I want both.

But I think I'd rather have a healthy unbeliever honestly, than an unhealthy believer, Christian. Just because, ah, for lots of reasons. I don't know if we have time for all that. So yes, I think if someone is really respectful of my values... I'm thinking of like a financial realm or something like that-

**Annie:** Totally.

**Melanie:** Yeah, that's really respectful of this is what I value. I don't value a big house. I value travel and relationship. As long as they can get our giving or you know, if they can really respect my values, yes, then yes, I think a person of a different faith or no faith.

**Annie:** At the end of this month, we do a whole week of coaching, financial health, relational, all that. And I'm with you. I don't mean my trainer at the gym. In fact, I haven't worked out with a trainer at the gym who has all the same beliefs I have. But when I'm thinking about this relationship.

**Melanie:** Yeah, Yeah. But when you get into the realm of the heart, but gosh, that can get messy because someone could be a believer and just really have some funky theology that could really mess you up.

**Annie:** Right. So let's talk about that. How do you find a counselor? Are we allowed to do like first dates?

**Melanie:** Yes.

**Annie:** And do like one or two appointments and then peace out?

**Melanie:** If I could do that with every new client or potential client, we would save us both a lot of time and money.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Melanie:** You know?

**Annie:** Okay.

**Melanie:** I think I've gotten really lucky. I usually do a phone consultation, which is better than nothing. It's better than an email. Because you can kind of get just more information and they can hear me talk about how I do therapy and it can kind of weeded out if something's not a good fit for either party. But a one-on-one, face-to-face, oh, that's all I need.

And I would say for the client too, they get a feel of who you are and how you interact with their questions. I think that's the best case. But it's hard because people are, you know, kind of in a hurry to schedule and-

**Annie:** Oh Yeah. Because they're calling for a reason.



**Melanie:** Right. They're ready to get in and go. I'm surprised sometimes that people don't ask more questions about my specific training or other therapists' experience, training.

**Annie:** Probably because so much is word of mouth.

**Melanie:** I guess so. Probably a lot of it.

**Annie:** One of our friends listening is saying, Okay, I found a counselor in my town. How many appointments do you try?

**Melanie:** Oh.

**Annie:** Is it one and done? And you decide after one, okay, I'm gonna sit with this person for the next year? Or is it three dates like an actual date?

**Melanie:** I'm mean, I'm putting myself in the client's shoes for a second. I think with a word of mouth, trusted referral, I think I know session one. But you know, it's kind of like how many dates do you go on? You know?

**Annie:** That's right. To be fair. You're right.

**Melanie:** But I think within a couple, you have a good... do you feel heard? Do you feel seen? Do you feel, I mean, some level of comfort. I mean, you're gonna probably be a little bit nervous. But I think you can pick up on those things pretty quickly. And come with questions for the client, you know?

**Annie:** Can therapists meet with someone two times and then say, Hey, I'm not the right therapist for you?

**Melanie:** Yeah. It's harder.

**Annie:** I hope y'all would.

**Melanie:** Yeah, I think so.

**Annie:** I hope that if I'm sitting there, my counselor has also decided they are comfortable, they feel like they can help me.

**Melanie:** That's rare but it does happen just... because you can't get all the information on a 15-minute phone call.

**Annie:** Sure.

**Melanie:** And just knowing I'm probably not the right fit for you because I don't really have training in this area. You know, people present with different issues in the paperwork than they actually sometimes want to...

**Annie:** Girl, that was my story. That was 100% my story.

**Melanie:** ...dive into. So you just kind of know that on the front end. They might say anxiety, but it's really this other thing.

**Annie:** They may say it's their family and it's their dating life. They may say it's their friendships and it is their work life. Yes.

**Melanie:** Right. So you get it. I am pretty on the front end kind of asking what is it that you're hoping for? What is it that you want? So I try to zoom in on that pretty quickly. It's hard though because I care about someone... If I've spent an hour with you, I already care about you. So it's a little harder, but I think it's the best for everyone if you can go ahead and refer them on and explain why, you know.

[00:34:51] <Music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation one more time to share about another amazing partner, [Chime](#). Let's talk finances. Yes, we totally have a financial coach coming later this month.

You may think credit score's no big deal. But if you're dealing with a low credit score or no credit score at all, that could be a problem for your future financial goals. That's why millions of people swear by Chime's Secured Credit Builder Visa credit card. You build your credit score safely with everyday purchases and on-time payments. Plus there's no annual fee or credit check to get started.

On top of that, their online checking account has tons of benefits that you'll love. Like their fee-free overdraft of up to \$200. Plus you can get paid up to two days early with direct deposit all while managing your money on the go. Sounds like a win-win all around.

Chime has no monthly fee or minimum balance or overdraft fees. You get access to 60,000 fee-free ATMs and you can even pay friends through Chime no matter what bank account they use. Start building your credit up. Open a Chime checking account with at least \$200 qualifying direct deposit to get started.

Get started at [chime.com/thatsoundsfun](https://chime.com/thatsoundsfun). That's [chime.com/thatsoundsfun](https://chime.com/thatsoundsfun). The Chime Credit Builder Visa credit card is issued by Stride Bank, N.A., member FDIC. Chime checking account and \$200 qualifying direct deposit required to

apply. Out of network atm withdrawal fees may apply. On time payment history may have a positive impact on your credit score. Late payment may negatively impact your credit score. Results may vary.

That link and pretty much every other link you would ever hope for are in the show notes. Or we send it out to you every Friday and Friday's AFD Week in Review. And you are going to want to get it this Friday. It's my first Friday in New York. So make sure you are signed up for Friday's AFD Week in Review email. That link is also in the show notes.

**Sponsor:** And one more amazing partner to tell you about, [KiwiCo](#). Okay, MiniBFFs, this one is for you. I love KiwiCo. And I mean it. KiwiCo delivers seriously fun learning for kids of all ages, whether it's about science or sensory play games, or geography. Every crate designed by their team of experts inspires excitement, curiosity, and discovery.

Sure, you can buy some bath bombs, but isn't it way more fun to make your own? KiwiCo crates are fun and stress-free so you can enjoy quality time tackling projects together. Their projects are designed by a team of educators, makers, engineers, and rocket scientists who brainstorm hundreds of ideas to create the most exciting, age-appropriate, and educational projects.

These are real engineering, science, and art projects with high-quality materials. We know how hard it is to find creative ways to keep the kids in your life busy, challenged, and off of their screens. No crate from KiwiCo's innovation factory leaves without approval from their toughest critics—kids.

The day the KiwiCo box arrives will be your kids' favorite day of the month. And there's something for all ages, from infants and preschools to teens and beyond. Redefine learning with play. Explore hands-on projects that build creative confidence with KiwiCo. Get 50% off your first month, plus free shipping on any crate line at [kiwico.com/thatsoundsfun](http://kiwico.com/thatsoundsfun). That's 50% off your first month at [Kiwico.com/thatsoundsfun](http://Kiwico.com/thatsoundsfun).

And now back to finish up our, build your board conversation with Melanie.

[00:38:08] <Music>

**Annie:** Counseling can be really expensive.

**Melanie:** Yes.

**Annie:** What do we do if it doesn't fit in our budget?

**Melanie:** The first thing I would say is ask the therapist if they do sliding scale is one way to ask. Like I really on the front end, my kind of boundary is someone meet for, you know, a certain amount of sessions weekly before moving to an every other week cadence, if that's what they decide to do. And I would rather someone pay less and have that consistency on the front end than start with every other week cadence.

But therapists are very all over the boards with that. But to me, I would say just ask if they would be willing to... "This is what I can pay, how can we best use this?"

**Annie:** Oh, right. So I've got \$500 that I can use for the rest of this year.

**Melanie:** Right. Sure.

**Annie:** How much counseling does that get me? How often can I see you? What can....

**Melanie:** Mm-hmm.

**Annie:** That's a great idea to kind of set a budget ahead of time and then go to the therapist to go, "Here's my budget. What does that afford me?"

**Melanie:** Yeah. And sometimes it may be a therapist might be like, "I can't do that." Some therapists do have some pro bono slots. You know, most clients are paying full rate but because of that they can see someone else for reduced rate.

Also the Refuge Center in Franklin has a sliding scale and they have a lot of mostly interns and pre-licensed therapists-

**Annie:** Oh sure. Who are getting their hours?

**Melanie:** Yeah. Yeah. ...who are seeing people. And they have a lot of supervision and training that they're getting. So though you don't have a licensed therapist... There are licensed therapists there, but predominantly the sliding skill people are more pre-licensed professionals. That's not a bad option.

**Annie:** No, not at all.

**Melanie:** You can get a really bright, pre-licensed-

**Annie:** Very Enthusiastic.

**Melanie:** .... who's getting a lot of support and supervision and can have a great, you know, experience. Or some people that are going back for like their second career that

have a more life experience. You could get lucky and get one of them. Like in my practice, I had three pre-licensed therapists and they usually start at a lower rate.

**Annie:** Oh sure.

**Melanie:** So I think just always ask. And then if someone called me, if I can't take them or I know who may be able to.

**Annie:** That's really helpful. Because that feels often like the barrier I hear, is like, yeah, things are going haywire in my life and also I'm barely making ends meet as it is. So how would I even afford this?

**Melanie:** Right. Yeah.

**Annie:** And so I think those are some really good steps we could take.

**Melanie:** Right. And then the other thing that people don't intuitively ask is for mental health. Like, I'm not on insurance panels, but I can... depending on the insurance plan, some people have mental health benefits that they don't know about.

**Annie:** Oh.

**Melanie:** So I could be an out of-

**Annie:** I might be that way. I need to look.

**Melanie:** I could be an out-of-network provider though I don't take Blue Cross Blue Shield or any insurance, I can... clients are sometimes surprised how much their insurance company will reimburse them.

**Annie:** This client of a therapist is surprised that that is an option.

**Melanie:** And I always tell clients to ask. Gets a phone call to ask about their mental health benefits. And sometimes it's, not to get too technical, but a deductible they have to meet, and then they get let's say 50% back instead of 80%.

**Annie:** I'm literally walking to our HR office after this and being like, what are my mental health benefits? Because we just got insurance. I'm sure it's in the paperwork. I own the company. I had to sign everything but by HR person.

**Melanie:** Because a lot of therapists, at least in my networks, don't take insurance for a lot of different reasons.

**Annie:** Certainly.

**Melanie:** But that is one kind of way to get people's money, get the money back to help with the cost.

**Annie:** That's amazing. Melanie, let's keep the conversation going about money. Do we always need therapy? Am I paying for this for the rest of my life? Is it okay if it's seasonal? Is it-

**Melanie:** Oh, it is seasonal.

**Annie:** It is seasonal.

**Melanie:** It is seasonal.

**Annie:** Okay.

**Melanie:** And I kind of laugh saying I'm a lifer. I don't know if I wasn't a therapist... It's not always the same level of need for me, but I like to have that accountability and that place to go. But if I weren't, yes, it's absolutely... I love a seasonal therapy because it has been a beautiful thing to see someone, let's say before they were just dating and then they kind of get to a place... they got what they came for kind of thing. Yeah.

And then, you know, they'll call well in that season of therapy and they're having their first baby. And they want to reenter for a different reason. Yes. And sometimes the season is seven years and sometimes it's six months. But yes, I always say, you're always welcome to come back. But I like very clear endings because I think that really helps with closure and just to honor the process. And then they're always welcome to come back. So, yes. I think it's very much a seasonal thing.

**Annie:** My counselor and I had this really interesting conversation that I will retell you now where, because I'm in New York for two months, she was like, so are we gonna do virtual, whatever? And I kind of said like, "I think I need to use the tools you've given me. I will call you if I need you. But I feel a little bit like, give me two months to use some of these tools that we have really worked on, particularly in the last year."

So it wasn't this like, "I'll never see you." But it was this like, "I think I'm gonna take a window, knowing that I can call my coach at any time, knowing my counselor is available to come out and help me. But also what if I use my tools?"

**Melanie:** Absolutely. I think that's where the real growth often happens. You know, it's like you learn to ride a bike and then you go ride on your own.

**Annie:** I am going to fall. I'm gonna scrape up my elbows.

**Melanie:** And there's support available, like you said.

**Annie:** Yeah. I have felt that. Since I saw her last week, I've had two decisions that I had to make that in my life historically I would've gone, Okay, maybe I should just make an appointment or maybe I... And then I went, "Use the tools. What do you know?"

**Melanie:** And you learn to trust yourself.

**Annie:** Yeah. Right? It's a little bit of that balance of like, counseling has... you know this for my life. Counseling has changed my life. I cannot imagine the pain I would've caused other people. That it magnified compared to the pain I've caused other people the last decade.

**Melanie:** Sure, sure.

**Annie:** I can't imagine. And some of the things the Lord's invited me to suffer through I don't know how I'd have done it without support.

**Melanie:** Like I need all my friends and my therapist and my spiritual director and my pastor and my... you know.

**Annie:** Yes, I need my board.

**Melanie:** Yes.

**Annie:** That's exactly it. And yet also, for the first time, Melanie, I feel this, like, use my tools. I have my tools. So it's never felt seasonal to me. And it isn't seasonal. I'm not like walking away from therapy by any stretch. But I have felt this, like, use the tools.

**Melanie:** I think clients feel that. And I think on my end as a therapist, we can both kind of feel when that season's coming to an end, a lot of times they're just a little bit scared. The client is a little bit scared to let go. As soon as I tell them, "You can come back anytime," they're like, "Okay, I think I'm ready." And I love that moment.

**Annie:** I mean, it's the first time I've ever left her office without the next appointment on the books. And I felt that. I felt like, Oh, God, okay, well, I'm not here. So it's

different. I'm going to New York, you know. But I've never left that office and not made my next appointment. And I just thought, Okay, you have tools, and you have her phone number. You have my Phone number.

**Melanie:** You know how to find her.

**Annie:** Right. Some of our friends listening are in a marriage that has imploded yesterday or their life, their work life imploded this morning. And they call a counselor and the counselor says, "Yeah, I'll call you back in the next 24 hours and we'll make an appointment in the next week." And that feels like, I don't know how to survive between now and then. Not ending life thoughts. So that is 911. That is go to the hospital right now. But life imploding, how do I wait a week? Talk to me from the therapist's side. Because that's happened to me before? Talk to me from the therapist's side of like, I feel like I need an appointment in the next 30 minutes and you're available on Tuesday.

**Melanie:** From a therapist, gosh, that's tough. I think unless it's life or death-

**Annie:** It's not life or death.

**Melanie:** Right. Sometimes what happens in those two weeks is some things are resolved and other issues, the real, you know, maybe a different issue arises. So even what they call, the client may call about a week or two before I can get them in, something has shifted, or, you know.

So it's hard because you want to be able to get them in more quickly. But you just can't serve them well unless you have space available. Yeah. So it's kind of worse to kind of rip off the band-aid and not be able to see them consistently than to just wait and hold and use your other resources.

**Annie:** You know, it almost feels like part of the counseling experience is your counselor knows what they're doing. And if they can't see you till Tuesday, okay.

**Melanie:** Oh, yeah. So you're saying if you're already connected with a therapist? Oh, either way-

**Annie:** You're exactly right. Either.

**Melanie:** Yeah, either way.

**Annie:** So what about suicidal thoughts? What about life-ending thoughts or harming your child thoughts, harming yourself, someone else? Is that a counselor phone call?



- Melanie:** Oh, yes. Yes. Yeah, for sure. If you're already established with someone, those are the exceptions to the boundary rules for me. That is a phone call that I will take. And then, you know, if I'm out of town and can't meet with them, it's emergency contact call, or it's a medical assistance call or something like that.
- Annie:** What if you don't have a therapist and you're having those thoughts?
- Melanie:** That's what's hard is people don't probably have resources readily available. I don't have it in front of me, but there are a lot of texting options available for mental health.
- Annie:** We'll put some in the show notes.
- Melanie:** Yes. Okay. Definitely. You know, people don't always feel comfortable, but it's sometimes less scary to text someone for help if you don't have another option than to make a phone call. And you know, people show up at your house. So sometimes that's been kind of a lifesaver truly-
- Annie:** Literally.
- Melanie:** ...in the interim.
- Annie:** I have a friend who has two little kids. And the first night she had them by herself she had to call someone else and say, "This feels too much. I'm not doing this well. I'm freaking out. Can you come help me?" She was not thinking of harming her children but she was thinking of I am overwhelmed in a way I don't know what to do. And once she said it out loud, our other friend was able to be like, Okay, yeah, it's eight o'clock. One of them goes down at 8:30, I'm coming right now.
- And in my life in the middle of the night when my brain is spiraling, if I will tell anyone else it stops the spiral.
- Melanie:** That's right.
- Annie:** So that feels helpful.
- Melanie:** And I think some they text... maybe it's a voice a phone call but just that's just an easy other... person on the other end just that you can mirror even absorb some of the stress and the pain. But you're not alone.
- Annie:** With the amount of friends we know are listening, there's someone who thinks, the only way this is gonna get better is if I end my life. So what would you say? I'm

sorry, that is a lot of pressure on you, Melanie. But what would you say to someone listening who goes, "There is no help for me. I should just be done."

**Melanie:** I think there's always a way. But we also need other people. None of us are meant to do it alone. So there are people available, even if you don't know them yet that can and will care and are available to help. I think there's always a way we just can't see it by ourselves.

**Annie:** A friend and I had this conversation and they said, It is never shameful to call 911. There's no embarrassment calling 911. They are meant to save your life in thousand ways. If you cut your hand while you're cooking, you are not embarrassed to call 911 to get help, right? So-

**Melanie:** They're trained for that. Even the voice on the other side of the phone just can be comforting. And just to help you know that you're not alone, and there's help available.

**Annie:** That's right.

**Melanie:** Absolutely.

**Annie:** Thank you for that. I just think I want to trust that that's an important thing for us to say today. Okay, what did we not say about counseling that you want to make sure we say?

**Melanie:** There are no bad or wrong questions to ask your therapist. Therapists can take care of themselves.

**Annie:** Oh, that's good to say.

**Melanie:** I don't really mean hey, would you go on vacation kind of questions. But that's fine, too. But I mean, more of like, what is your training? Do you have experience in this area? I found that people don't ask enough questions and I know they sometimes don't know what to ask, but there's no wrong question to ask if you're trying to find the right fit.

Also there's no shame in asking, Hey, can we meet, like we were saying earlier, and just determine if this is a good fit? I think people are afraid of maybe offending someone or... Gosh, this person has to be someone you feel safe with. I would rather have someone that feel safe with than someone with amazing skills.

**Annie:** Right. Right. A counseling ninja that I don't feel safe with, I'm still not gonna feel great.

**Melanie:** Yeah, your guard is going to be up, your protectors are going to be at work. So I'd say that. And real change takes a long time. It's not a quick fix. I mean, they're coaches and people, life coaches for the solution base. But real deep change just takes time. So I think for me, I'm kind of in it for the long game, just knowing it's just long, patient work.

**Annie:** One of the gifts from going to Onsite workshops in 2018, as they say... that's when I went. They said, counseling in general, but particularly Onsite changes your life two degrees, not 180 degrees. You don't walk out of here a different person. That was actually my fear before I went, Melanie, is I was like, what are they going to uncover about me? It's gonna make me not Annie. So silly.

Now, it was not silly at the time. It was very scary at the time. But your life-changing two degrees does not look different the day you get out. But six years later, my life looks very different. I think they say something like, from Antarctica to change your course two degrees ends up the difference between landing later in the US or in Europe.

**Melanie:** Right. That's a great metaphor.

**Annie:** That has helped me a lot. The long game of therapy is let's just do two degrees.

**Melanie:** And if there's something to invest in, it seems like your own mental and emotional health, at least for me is, why not invest in yourself and that way. Because at the end of the day, that's all you have is you and in your health.

**Annie:** Well, you're amazing. You're just one of the best.

**Melanie:** Thank you for having me. It's fun to see you again.

**Annie:** I know. To see you in person. Well, will you say the name of your practice again? Come Alive.

**Melanie:** Come Alive Counseling.

**Annie:** Okay. We'll link to it. And then people can either reach out, you know, wherever they live, if they're particularly in Tennessee.

Okay, so Melanie Rogers, because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you.

**Melanie:** Now I just got back from Telluride, Colorado on kind of a scouting trip and what sounds really fun to me-

**Annie:** Scouting?

**Melanie:** Well, for. What sounds fun to me is taking a group of women on a therapeutic adventure trip. Maybe do some fly fishing and some hiking and some paddleboarding and some maybe four-by-four adventures and kind of have a just take my office into the outdoors. So that's what sounding really fun.

**Annie:** That is cool. Was the scouting trip profitable?

**Melanie:** Sure.

**Annie:** Meaning did you learn what you wanted to learn? Did you find things?

**Melanie:** It's one of my favorite places in Colorado and have some good friends out there. So got to stay at a fly fishing ranch and kind of scout out the cabins and just think kind of go out there with a different lens, kind of thinking more than my fun just kind of what could be therapeutic playgrounds out there.

**Annie:** Wow. That's amazing.

**Melanie:** That sounds fun.

**Annie:** That's a great idea. We will be there. We will be there.

**Melanie:** You can come. We'd love for you to come along.

[00:55:10] <Music>

**Outro:** Oh, y'all, isn't she so awesome? She's one of my favorite therapists in the actual whole world. Come Alive is such an incredible counseling resource for us here in Nashville but also for any of y'all. I'm just so thankful for her. I feel like I learned so much in this episode.

If you want a full list of the resources from our Build Your Board series, and how to find the guidebook, go to [anniefdowns.com/buildyourboard](http://anniefdowns.com/buildyourboard).

If you need anything else from me, I'm embarrassingly easy to find Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. All the places you may need me, that is how you can find me.

I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home, do something that sounds fun to you. I'll do the same. Today what sounds fun to me, I mean, I've never lived on Monday in New York, you guys. So here we are. That just sounds fun to me as it is.

Y'all have a great week. We'll see you back here on Thursday as we continue our Build Your Board series with none other than my mentor, Nancy. Y'all get ready. She's coming on Thursday. We'll see y'all then.